

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

INFO ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

NAKHON PHANOM

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

COGARD POLAD

XMT AMEMBASSY SUVA

UNCLAS STATE 010202

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PFOR, XC, US

SUBJECT: JANUARY 16 EA PRESS SUMMARY

INDOCHINA

1. FANK LAUNCHES OFFENSIVE NW OF PP WITH 1000 TROOPS
SUPPORTED BY APCS AND T-28S TO BLUNT 10-DAY-OLD REBEL
ATTACK AGAINST CAPITAL (UPI, PHINQ). NEWSMEN REPORT
GKR ARTILLERY AND AIRCRAFT POUND REBEL POSITIONS AS
INFANTRY ADVANCES AGAINST HEAVY FIRE (AP NYT, SUN).
FANK APC KNOCKED OUT BY ANTITANK ROCKET. US SOURCES
SAY REBELS BUILT INTERLOCKING BUNKERS AND TRENCHES IN
AREA 5 TO 7 MILES FROM PP THAT WOULD REQUIRE DIRECT
HITS AND INFANTRY ASSAULTS TO DESTROY. FANK COMMAND
REPORTS KAF CHOPPERS EVACUATE WOUNDED FROM SURROUNDED
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GKR POSITION 8 MILES NW OF PP (AP, NYT).

2. FANK SOURCES SAY THAT SO FAR ONLY 10 OF 300 DEFENDERS OF OVERRUN CEMENT PLANT NEAR KAMPOT HAVE REACHED GKR LINES 12 MILES AWAY (AP, NYT). ROCKET SLAMS INTO DOWNTOWN PP SLUM, KILLS 7 AND WOUNDS 10 (AP NYT, SUN; UPI, PHINQ).

3. SIHANOUK STATEMENT FROM PEKING CALLS ON MANSFIELD AND FULBRIGHT TO USE INFLUENCE TO PREVENT NEW USAF INTERVENTION IN CAMBODIA (UPI, PHINQ).

4. GVN PROPOSAL, THAT BOTH SIDES REFRAIN FROM ATTACKING CIVILIANS, REJECTED BY VC, ACCORDING TO SVN SPOKESMAN. PROPOSAL FOR PARTIAL C-F PRESENTED AT JMC MEETING THAT ALSO DISCUSSED RESUMPTION OF POW EXCHANGE WITHOUT RESULT (UPI, PHINQ). THIEU ORDERS CHIEF NEGOTIATOR BACK TO PARIS IN NEW ATTEMPT TO BREAK DEADLOCK WITH VC AND REACTIVATE TALKS (CHITRIB).

5. VC CHARGE GVN MAKES LARGE-SCALE BOMBING RAIDS AGAINST SUPPLY POINT 72 MILES NW OF SAIGON THAT DAMAGE BUILDINGS USED IN POW EXCHANGE. GVN SPOKESMAN SAYS HE HAS "NO INFORMATION" ON RAIDS, ADDS THAT HE FEELS COMMUNIST CLAIM IS FALSE (UPI, NYT). ARVN SPOKESMAN SAYS NVA SHELLS GVN POSITIONS NEAR LE MINH, MAKES ASSAULT TO PREVENT REINFORCEMENTS FROM REACHING NEWLY-RETAKEN CAMP; FIGHTING CONTINUES IN AREA. GVN SAYS VC FIRE MORTAR ROUNDS INTO CHU CHI, DISTRICT CAPITAL 20 MILES NW OF SAIGON (AP, NYT).

6. 140 PRO-GVN LEGISLATORS (OUT OF 216) PROPOSE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO ALLOW THIEU TO SEEK THIRD TERM IN 1975 (AP, SUN; WP; UPI, PHINQ). POLITICAL SOURCES SAY THIEU CONFIDENT OF PASSAGE SINCE NON-COMMUNIST OPPOSITION (PARTICULARLY AN QUANG BUDDHISTS) ARE DIVIDED, AND LITTLE PUBLIC OPPOSITION EXPECTED (CHITRIB). AMENDMENT HAS BEEN EXPECTED SINCE THIEU "SEALED" CONTROL OF ONCE-UNRULY SENATE LAST AUGUST, AND IS SURE TO PASS. THIEU UNCLASSIFIED

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ELECTED IN 1967, RE-ELECTED IN ONE MAN "RACE" IN 1971, HAS BEEN STEADILY ACCUMULATING POLITICAL POWER SINCE AT EXPENSE OF "NOW BARELY VISIBLE OR AUDIBLE LEGAL OPPOSITION" THAT NOW NUMBERS ABOUT 40 IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. OPPOSITION LEADER SAYS AMENDMENT WOULD BE "TET GIFT TO PRESIDENT", ADDS "THERE IS NO MORE DEMOCRACY". TWO OTHER CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ALSO PROPOSED BY LEGISLATORS TO ENHANCE OWN POWER.

ONE WOULD POSTPONE ELECTIONS OF PROVINCE CHIEFS AND MAYORS, WHO INSTEAD WOULD BE SELECTED BY PRESIDENT AND APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT. THIS WOULD REDUCE POWER OF MILITARY CORPS COMMANDERS WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY MANIPULATED THE 44 LUCRATIVE PROVINCE CHIEF POSITIONS. OTHER PROPOSED AMENDMENT WOULD GIVE PARLIAMENT POWER TO SELECT SUPREME COURT JUDGES FROM LISTS SUBMITTED BY JUSTICE MINISTRY, INSTEAD OF PRESENT SYSTEM OF PRESIDENT NAMING JUDGES FROM LISTS FURNISHED BY COMMITTEES OF LAWYERS AND JUDGES. MARKHAM SEES AMENDMENTS AS VICTY FOR NGUYEN VAN NGAN, FORMER VIETMINH WHO MANAGES NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR THIEU. SOME VIETNAMESE BELIEVE EARLY ACTION ON AMENDMENTS WILL TAKE PLACE, POSSIBLY BY TET, TO AVOID ACTION LATER WHEN DECLINING SVN ECONOMY MAY AROUSE VOCAL DISCONTENT (MARKHAM, NYT).

7. GVN FM TELLS PRESS CONFERENCE THAT PRC BOATS ENTERED PARACEL ISLAND WATERS AND PUT PEOPLE ASHORE "IN VIOLATION OF SVN SOVEREIGNTY", SEES "SUDDEN CHALLENGE" AS THREAT TO PEACE AND SECURITY OF REGION. SVN SOURCES SAY SOLDIERS LANDED, BUT REPORT UNCONFIRMED, AND EARLIER REPORTS DESCRIBED CHINESE AS FISHERMEN. LONG-DISPUTED SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE OVER PARACELS AND SPRATLEYS BY SVN AND PRC RECENTLY REVIVED BY POSSIBILITY OF OIL DEPOSITS IN SOUTH CHINA SEA. FIVE DAYS AGO NCNA QUOTED PRC MFA STATEMENT THAT AGAIN ASSERTED CHINA'S CLAIM TO ISLANDS (REUTER, SAIGON).

8. MCARTHUR (LAT, JAN. 14) REPORTS FROM SAIGON US INTELLIGENCE "PONDERING A MYSTERY" THAT MAY CLARIFY HANOI'S IMMEDIATE WAR PLANS. QUESTION IS LOCATION OF NVA FIRST DIVISION THAT SEEMS TO HAVE LEFT DELTA IN NOVEMBER FOR AREA ON SVN-KHMER BORDER SW OF SAIGON. UNCLASSIFIED

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MOVE SPELLED SHIFT IN COMMUNIST PLANS, AND DELTA FIGHTING REVERTED TO SMALL-UNIT AND GUERRILLA CLASHES, WHILE THREAT TO SAIGON INCREASED. SINCE THEN INFO ON FIRST DIV. CONFUSED AND CONTRADICTIONARY AND UNIT SEEMS TO HAVE "DISAPPEARED" FROM WAR MAPS. ONE RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL BELIEVES DIVISION MAY BE FIRST NVA UNIT HEADING BACK TO NVN. IF FIRST DIV. WITHDRAWN, CHANCES OF IMMEDIATE MASSIVE OFFENSIVE IN SAIGON AREA LESSENER, THOUGH NVA COULD STILL MAKE MAJOR PUSH NEAR DMZ WITH UNITS IN PLACE THERE.

9. BATTELLE (BOST. H-A, JAN 12.) WRITES OF GUY KIRKMAN, CARE REPRESENTATIVE BACK FOR REST AFTER 18 MONTHS IN VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA WORKING WITH REFUGEES. KIRKMAN DESCRIBES KHMER PROBLEM OF "2 MILLION REFUGEES OUT OF

A POPULATION OF 7 MILLION", SAYS CARE HELPED RESETTLE
SOME WHERE POSSIBLE, WILL HELP RESETTLE MORE WHEN
FIGHTING DIMINISHES.

INDONESIA

10. REUTER JAKARTA REPORTS GOI CLOSED UNIVERSITIES
AND SCHOOLS IN CAPITAL WEDNESDAY AND BANNED OUTDOOR
ASSEMBLY OF MORE THAN FIVE PERSONS FOLLOWING
TUESDAY'S RIOTS. ONE STUDENT REPORTED KILLED, BUT
NO OFFICIAL ESTIMATE YET ON INJURED OR ARRESTED.
DAMAGED JAPANESE PROPERTY INCLUDED BURNED-OUT
TOYOTA OFFICES; JAPAN EMBASSY REPORTED HOMES OF
SEVERAL JAPANESE CITIZENS WERE DAMAGED. GOI CANCELS
TANAKA'S SCHEDULED WEDN
E E E E E E E

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